

Participating in a Peer Review

Composition of Review Groups

Members of a review group are selected to review applications by matching expertise with the given topic areas of the application under review. **Voting members** of the group include:

- Chairperson
- Scientists
- **Consumers**
- Fiscal Consultants

In addition, Government employees participate in the review meeting to fulfill administrative and programmatic responsibilities in a **nonvoting capacity**:

- SRA (Scientific Review Administrator)
- Government Observers

1. Scientific Review Administrator (SRA)

The SRA is a scientist (a Government employee) whose function is to serve as the overall administrator. The SRA selects the Chairperson, the members, orients the members, administers the meeting, records application scores, and oversees the preparation of summary statements for each application. In addition, the SRA assigns applications to primary and secondary scientific reviewers and consumers.

2. Chairperson

Chairpersons are highly qualified senior scientists, not Federal employees, who offer extensive scientific leadership and research evaluation experience as research program directors and peer review panelists. The Chairperson generally has broad expertise in a relevant scientific area and is responsible for reading all applications prior to the meeting and conducting the formal meeting proceedings. They may also serve as a primary or secondary reviewer on some of the applications. During the meeting, the Chairperson leads the group process and is responsible for ensuring that all applications receive a fair and competent review.

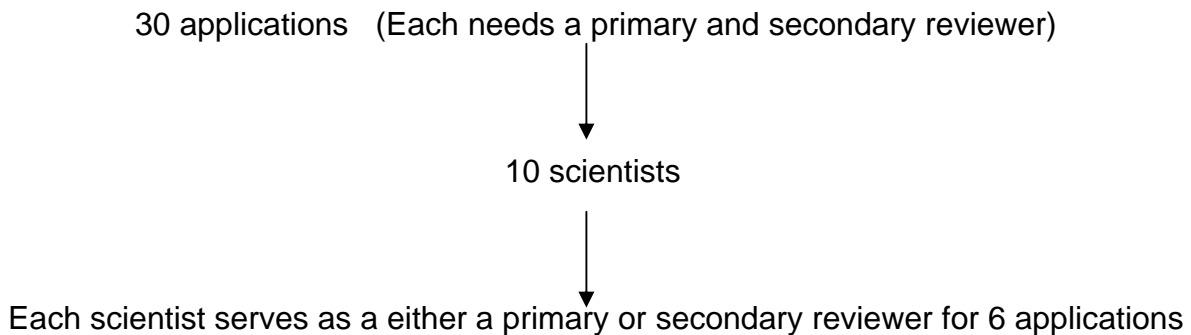
3. Scientists

Scientific members are selected on the basis of their expertise in relevant areas and achievement as independent scientific investigators. They have extensive research experience, including experience managing research programs. The review group contains a mix of junior, mid-level, and senior scientists to provide a balance of established and emerging scientific perspectives. Most scientists will have previous experience serving in peer review, but some may not. They serve as primary and secondary reviewers.

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continued

Example for **RFAs** (Request for Applications) and **PAs** (Program Announcements):



4. Consumers

Consumers usually have first-hand experience, either as cancer survivors, relatives of cancer patients, or are active in cancer advocacy organizations. You have been selected on the basis of your involvement in the cancer experience; cancer advocacy experience; ability to communicate and advocate a position effectively; ability to think “globally” and to see beyond one’s personal experience; ability to work well in groups; and membership and active participation in a cancer-related advocacy and/or voluntary organization.

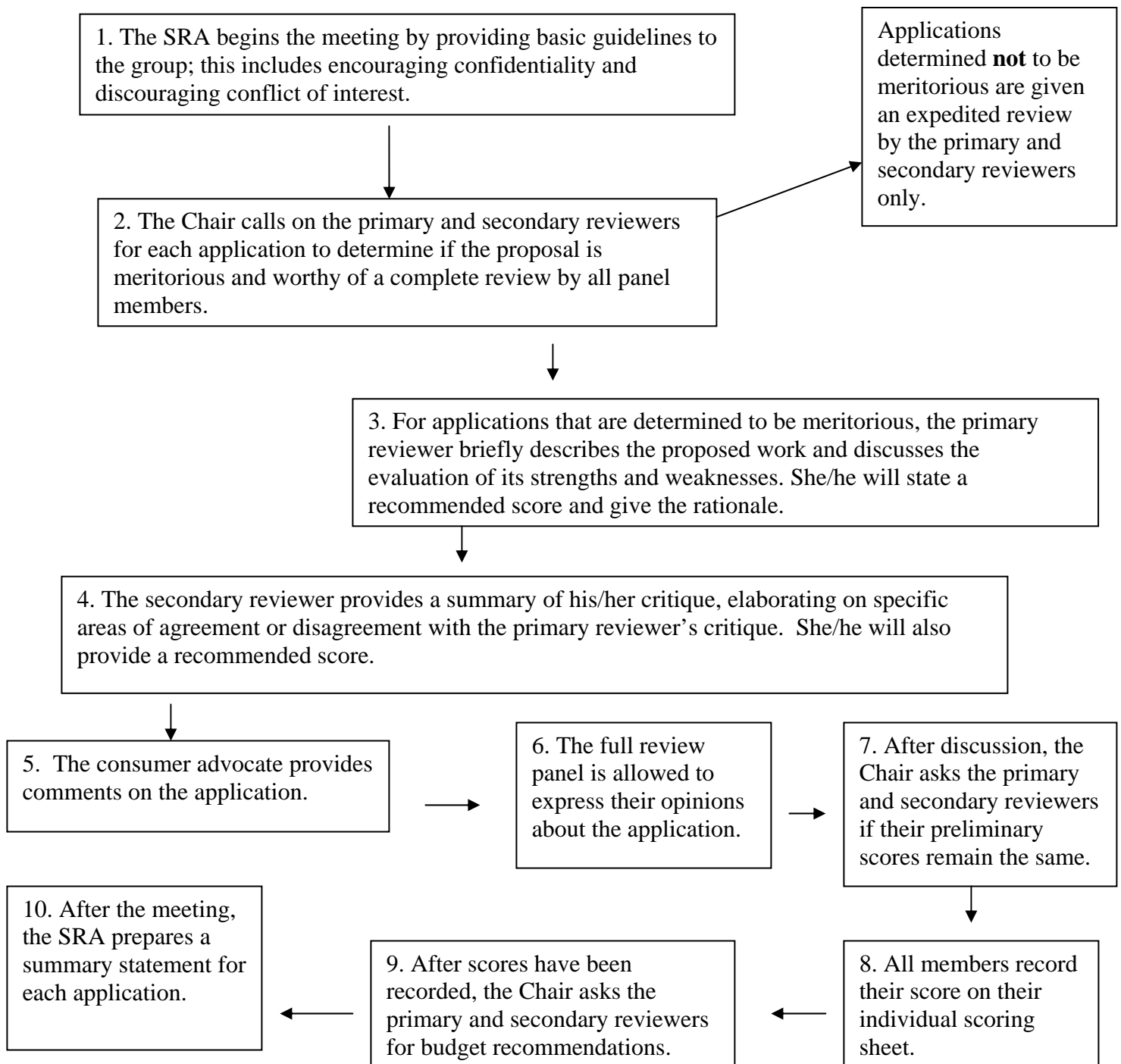
5. Fiscal Consultants

Individuals with a business or administrative background may serve on a review group to provide advice or answer questions regarding the business/accounting practices of the institution or issues, for example, related to charges/payment for patient care and testing and possible alternate sources of reimbursement (i.e., insurance coverage). They may vote or comment on relevant sections of the application.

6. Government Observers

Government observers are nonvoting NCI staff who witness the review proceedings. They have experience in a relevant scientific or clinical discipline and are usually the NCI staff person(s) who represent the scientific management and programmatic decision-making process. These individuals are termed **Program Directors**, and in addition to observing the review proceedings, they will usually make a brief presentation to the members prior to the formal review of applications and are available to answer questions about NCI program goals.

Review Meeting Procedures for RFAs & PAs



Tips for Participating in a Meeting (Compiled from CARRA Members)

Participation Aspect	Tips
Overall Stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain professionalism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dress in business casual clothing. ○ Avoid canceling your participation at the last minute (finding a replacement is often impossible). ○ Prepare to work through meal times and into the evening. • Try to avoid being openly angry or frustrated. • Remember that your patient or family perspective is uniquely different from the scientists' perspective, and is the value you add. • Remember that when meeting participants see you, they are reminded of cancer's impact on patients and families, and ultimate reason for holding the peer review meeting. • Use your moral authority as a patient or family member sparsely and carefully so as to retain its impact. • Maintain a sense of humor.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate your ideas clearly and succinctly. • Represent your community's perspective rather than your individual situation or agenda. Example: Use "we" rather than "I." • Avoid personal medical stories. • Ask questions to reveal underlying assumptions that have been taken for granted. Communicating in lay terms the rationale for, or logic behind, an issue can be very helpful to the overall discussion. • Describe the real world implications of the discussion for patients and families. Examples: Quality of life, independent functioning, insurance reimbursement.
Your Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify an ally in your peer review meeting. • Act collaboratively with others whenever possible. • If there are other advocates, discuss different approaches during break times. • Try to generalize your experience and that of your group with a systemic problem or issue, realizing that it is still one of a few cases. • Speak to your SRA if you feel you are not getting called on or "heard" • Don't get bogged down in trying to understand all the scientific details. Your primary role is to represent the perspective of cancer patients and others affected by cancer.